

# IAS CONOPS

## International Assistance System Concept of Operations

### FAQ

**Q: What is the International Assistance System?**

**A:** The International Assistance System Concept of Operations (IAS CONOPS) is a detailed plan for processing offers, submitting requests, and accepting foreign offers of assistance (commodities or personnel) to support response and relief efforts in the United States. The IAS was created to integrate foreign assistance into a domestic disaster operation. The Department of State (DOS), The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are the primary federal departments and agencies for the IAS.

**Q: When is the IAS CONOPS activated?**

**A:** The IAS will not be automatically activated for every large domestic disaster. It will only be activated under catastrophic circumstances if the United States Government (USG) requests or decides to accept international offers of assistance for the disaster response and if FEMA needs help managing the offers.

**Q: How does this affect state, local, or tribal agreements that are already in place?**

**A:** The IAS CONOPS applies only to formal transactions between foreign governments or international organizations and the USG, during large-scale domestic disasters following a Stafford Act declaration. The IAS does not apply to foreign offers, from either governments or private sources, made to state, local, or tribal governments. It does not supplant existing bi-lateral agreements that a federal agency, under its own authority, or a state, local or tribal government may have with another country. It is recommended that all direct bilateral foreign assistance offered and/or received by a state, local or tribal government, be reported to FEMA field staff to ensure efforts and assistance are not duplicated and federal regulations are followed.

**Q: How can the international community best help the American people following a major disaster?**

**A:** The best way to support survivors of disaster in the United States is through a cash donation to a voluntary relief agency operating in the affected region. The Department of State can provide a list of these agencies to interested governments.

**Q: How does a foreign government submit an offer of assistance to the U.S. government?**

**A:** In general, the USG does not expect to accept offers of international assistance. When appropriate, however, offers of assistance should be submitted to the Department of State through the U.S. Embassy, the Department of State country desk officer, or the Department's task force that is addressing the disaster. This process will also be used for foreign military assistance offered to the Department of Defense.

**Q: What happens to the assistance donated by a foreign country?**

**A:** Resources accepted under the IAS become the property of the USG, and will be used for response and recovery assistance. USAID activates and manages a database that tracks international assistance and requests (if any) for international resources.

**Q: How does the USG decide which donations to accept?**

**A:** Acceptance is based on need, as determined by a USG assessment of crucial requirements. The USG will also consider USG regulatory constraints and the ability to absorb the donations into domestic operations.

**Q: How can I learn more about the International Assistance Systems and the IAS/CONOPS?**

**A:** For further information, domestic entities should contact FEMA's International Affairs office at [fema-international@dhs.gov](mailto:fema-international@dhs.gov). Abroad, foreign governments should contact the U.S. embassy. Within the United States, foreign governments should contact the State Department country desk officer and/or Crisis Management Support at [ses-o\\_cms@state.gov](mailto:ses-o_cms@state.gov).